

SIMILE ZOLA, NOVELIST AND REFORMER
199

dared to insinuate that there were drain-shops in *the faubourgs* /
The man lied, he insulted M. Gambetta's electors, he could only be a scoundrel. To the cess-pool with him, sweep him away!
And all the hounds who were waiting for their master to toss them a bone, all the curs who lived on the crumbs from his table, executed his orders, and sprang, snarling, after the unlucky writer. . . . Ah! I laugh. There suddenly conies a change.
The masses, whose evolution never ceases, grow tired of M. Gambetta, accuse him of acting contrary to his programme, of seeking personal enjoyment, of waxing fat in the seat of power and keeping none of his most express promises. . . . And on the day when they hoot him, he is maddened by rage, he forgets that the Banes and the Moquets have vouched for the temperance of Belleville, and he furiously calls the electors drunken slaves! All brawlers, and all sots !

" Now the author of ' L'Assommoir' had not insulted them. He had never called them squallers or cowards, nor, in particular, had he threatened to track them to their lairs. . . . He was less severe : he pitied them. . . . Leave the literary men in peace then, you political gentlemen, you majestic humbugs, who prate with your tongues in your cheeks, and yet wish to be respected! You can see now how shameful it was to heap insults upon a peaceable writer whose one concern was truth, to hunt him down as if he had been a common malefactor, and this solely by way of electoral advertisement; for directly an obstacle is offered to your own ambition, you rush upon the masses to suppress them, whereas the novelist only spoke of curing them. . . . And you, good people, go and vote for all those humbugs

who, so long as you
work for their benefit, promise to give you
jam ! You are great,
you are noble, and if a passer-by
ventures to advise you to
work, those humbugs declare it to be
sacrilege, and hasten to
immolate him before you, to prove to you
that you are indeed
perfect. But on the day when you refuse
to be duped any
longer, when you claim the jam they have
so often promised,
they turn round on you and insult you, call
you drunken slaves,
and threaten to have you shot down in
your lairs ! With a
fine show of indignation they formerly
denied that My-Boots
existed; but, all at once, if they are to be
credited, it is actually